

Appl. No. 09/992,454
Amdt. dated July 12, 2004
Reply to Office action of May 20, 2004

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-13 as amended in Amendment A filed February 21, 2003 are presently pending in the application.

In this amendment, Claims 2, 6, 7, and 10-13 have been amended.

Claims 1 and 9 have been canceled without prejudice to filing a continuation with respect thereto.

Claims 3-5 and 8 remain unchanged.

As set forth below, the amendments to the Claims are believed to place the Claims in condition for allowance. In view of the amendments, as discussed below, reconsideration of the Application and issuance of a Notice of Allowability are respectfully requested.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected independent Claims 1 and 9, but noted that dependent Claims 2-5, 7, 10 and 12 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form, including the elements of their respective base claims and any intervening claims. Claim 2 depended from independent Claim 1 and has been amended to include the elements of Claim 1. Claim 2 is thus believed to be in condition for allowance.

Claims 3-5 depend from Claim 2 and hence are also considered to be in condition for allowance.

Claim 6 originally depended from Claim 1, but has been amended to depend from Claim 2. Claim 6 is thus believed to be in condition for allowance. Claim 7 originally depended from Claim 1 via Claim 6.

In accordance with the Examiner's indication that Claim 7 was objected to as depending from a rejected base claim, Claim 7 has been amended to be placed in independent form and to

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include the elements of Claims 1 and 6. Claim 7 is thus believed to be in condition for allowance.

Claim 8, as currently written depends from Claim 6. With the amendment to Claim 6, Claim 8 now depends from Claim 2. Hence, Claim 8 is believed to be allowable.

Claim 10 depended from independent Claim 9 and has been amended to be placed in independent form and to include the elements of Claim 9. Claim 10 is thus believed to be in condition for allowance.

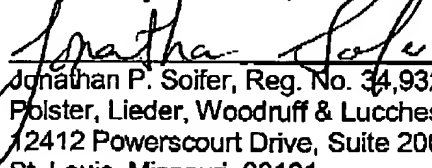
Claims 11-13 have been amended to depend from Claim 10 and thus are also believed to be in condition for allowance.

Claims 1 and 9 have been canceled without prejudice to the filing of a continuation with respect thereto. In canceling Claims 1 and 9, Applicant is not conceding that Examiner's assertion that Claims 1 and 9 are anticipated by Prueitt, Pat. No. 6010429 is correct. Rather, Claims 1 and 9 have been canceled to expedite the issuance of a patent from this application.

In view of the foregoing amendments to the application, Claims 2-8 and 10-13 are believed to be in condition for allowance. A Notice of Allowability with respect to these claims is thus respectfully requested.

Dated: 7/12/04

Respectfully Submitted,


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